

Report

Land to the North of The Drove Way, Istead Rise,
Gravesham

Breeding Bird Survey Report

For Ptarmigan Land A Ltd

27 May 2026

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

Logika Consultants Ltd. ('Logika') has been commissioned by Ptarmigan Land A Ltd to undertake breeding bird surveys of a proposed development at Land to the North of The Drove Way, Istead Rise, Gravesham (hereafter referred to as 'the Site').

The development (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development') is for up to 100 residential dwellings (Class C3), including the formation of new accesses from The Drove Way, the provision of new areas of public open space and all other associated infrastructure and ancillary works (all detailed matters reserved other than means of access).

The habitats onsite (arable land) have the potential to be used by a variety of birds, including species listed as Species of Principal Importance (SPI) and noted on the birds of conservation concern (BoCC) red list (such as skylark). The potential loss of breeding territories for SPI or BoCC red-listed species as a direct result of the proposed development will be an important consideration for the Local Planning Authority when determining the planning application.

Breeding bird surveys were undertaken onsite between March and June 2025 to identify the baseline breeding bird assemblage and identify any potential ornithological constraints present. The results will be used to assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Development and inform the scheme design to reduce potential ornithological impacts.

1.2 The Site

The Site, as defined by the Site boundary in **Figure 1.1**, is located north of the Drove Way, Istead Rise, Gravesend in Kent, approximately 5.7ha in extent, with a central grid reference TQ 63378 70439. An initial assessment of aerial photographs indicate that the Site is approximately 5ha with habitats including a central arable field with woodland located in the southeastern corner. The Site is surrounded by hedgerows on all other sides with arable fields located to the north and west and residential areas to the south.

1.3 Legislation

All wild birds, their nests and eggs are, with few exceptions, protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Species listed under Schedule 1 of the Act, have special protection with increased penalties for offences committed towards these birds. Additional protection is provided to species listed under Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild bird (the 'Birds Directive').



Figure 1-1: Site Location

2 Methodology

The breeding bird surveys covered the red line boundary area, as a 100m buffer. The survey area consisted mostly of arable land with boundary hedgerows and treelines. The surveys followed an adapted method based on the BTO's CBC methodology (Gilbert et al., 1998)¹, whereby the observer undertakes a census of all species present. The location of each bird detected (visually and / or aurally) was mapped using the standard two-character BTO codes, and bird activity was recorded using standard behaviour codes (Marchant, 1983²).

Notable species are defined as:

- Species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended)³;
- Species listed on Annex I of the European Union (EU) Birds Directive⁴;
- Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC⁵) red list species (Stanbury et al., 2021⁶); and
- Species of Principal Importance (SPI) noted on The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (as amended)⁷.

Four survey visits were undertaken between May and June 2025, at broadly 10-day intervals from the previous visit. The proposed four-visit survey is reduced from the recommended six-visit survey due to the habitats present within the Site and the likelihood of interest features being recorded – four well-timed visits are considered sufficient to establish if birds of open ground are present and have the potential to be impacted by the development.

All surveys were undertaken in favourable conditions, avoiding periods of heavy rain, or strong or cold winds, therefore minimising variation in bird activity levels due to weather conditions. Visits started at least half an hour after dawn and were completed no later than midday. A different route (start and end point) was used on each survey visit to ensure that certain parts of the survey area did not receive systematically better coverage due to a possible decline in song (or other breeding bird activity) output later in the morning. Surveys routes were planned to ensure full coverage of the Site each visit whilst also causing the least disturbance possible.

Full survey details, including dates, timings and weather conditions can be found in **Appendix 1**.

2.1.1 Territory Mapping

On completion of the field survey, results were collated and analysed and provided as maps of indicative territory centre-points, made across all visits within the survey period. Territory mapping

¹ Gilbert, G, Gibbons, D.W. & Evans, J. (1998). *Bird Monitoring Methods: A manual of techniques for key UK species*. RSPB, Bedfordshire

² Marchant, J.H. (1983) BTO Common Birds Census Instructions. Tring: British Trust for Ornithology.

³ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>

⁴ European Parliament and Council of the European Union (2009) Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds. Official Journal of the European Union, L20, pp. 7–25

⁵ Birds of Conservation Concern 5. Available at: [bocc-5-a5-4pp-single-pages.pdf](https://www.bcc5.org.uk/bocc-5-a5-4pp-single-pages.pdf)

⁶ Stanbury, A.J., Eaton, M.A., Aebischer, N.J., Balmer, D.E., Brown, A.F., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D.G. and Win, I. (2021) *The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain*. **British Birds**, 114, pp. 723–747

⁷ Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) lists Species of Principal Importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. Available at:

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

analysis was based on criteria adapted from Amar et al. (2006)⁸ (See **Appendix 2**) and involved an experienced ornithologist looking for spatial groupings of song registrations.

No temporal restrictions have been applied such that any grouping within more than one visit represented, or consisting of at least one registration of song, has been assessed as a territory. These data have been used to determine the number and distribution of species, and overall breeding assemblage within the survey area.

As territory locations were derived from a combination of mapped visits (as per the CBC methodology (Gilbert et al., 1998)); it should be noted that mapped territory locations represent indicative breeding territories and not specific nesting locations.

2.1.2 Limitations

There were no deviations, limitations or constraints to the breeding bird surveys.

⁸ Amar, A., Hewson, C.M., Thewlis, R.M., Smith, K.W., Fuller, R.J., Lindsell, J.A., Conway, G., Butler, S. & MacDonald, M.A. (2006). *What's Happening to Our Woodland Birds? Long-Term Changes in the Populations of Woodland Birds*. BTO Research Report 169 & RSPB Research Report 19. Thetford: BTO and Sandy: RSPB.

3 Results

A total of 34 bird species were recorded during the survey period:

- Two bird species were listed as Schedule 1 on the WCA: hobby *Falco subbuteo* and red kite *Milvus milvus*;
- Six species are listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act as Species of Principal Importance (SPI), including: skylark *Alauda arvensis*, linnet *Linaria cannabina*, house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, song thrush *Turdus philomelos* and swift *Apus apus*; and
- Nine species are included on the Birds of Conservation Concern Red List, namely herring gull *Larus argentatus*, lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus*, swift *Apus apus*, house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, linnet *Linaria cannabina*, skylark *Alauda arvensis*, song thrush *Turdus philomelos* and greenfinch *Chloris chloris*.

Bird activity recorded during the surveys was typical of a mixed farmland and urban-edge assemblage, with the majority of species exhibiting foraging, commuting, and territorial behaviours associated with boundary habitats.

Most observations comprised individuals foraging within hedgerows, trees, and scrub, or moving through the Site and wider area. Common passerines such as blackbird, robin, wren, and tits were frequently recorded singing and calling from vegetation, indicating territorial behaviour and potential breeding activity within boundary features.

Several species, including corvids (e.g. carrion crow, magpie, rook and jackdaw) and pigeons/doves, were recorded commuting and foraging across the Site, with occasional use of taller trees for perching and vantage points. Gulls (including herring gull and black-headed gull) and swift were primarily observed overflying or utilising the airspace above the Site.

Evidence of breeding behaviour was largely confined to boundary habitats, with no nesting activity or territorial behaviour identified within the Site interior. Notably, skylark (see **Figure 3-1**), a typical ground-nesting species, was recorded off-Site only, where singing and display behaviour indicated the presence of breeding territories within the wider survey area.

No other ground-nesting species were recorded or showed evidence of breeding within the Site, confirming that the Site itself provides limited suitability for ground-nesting birds.

A summary of the species recorded is provided within **Appendix 3**.

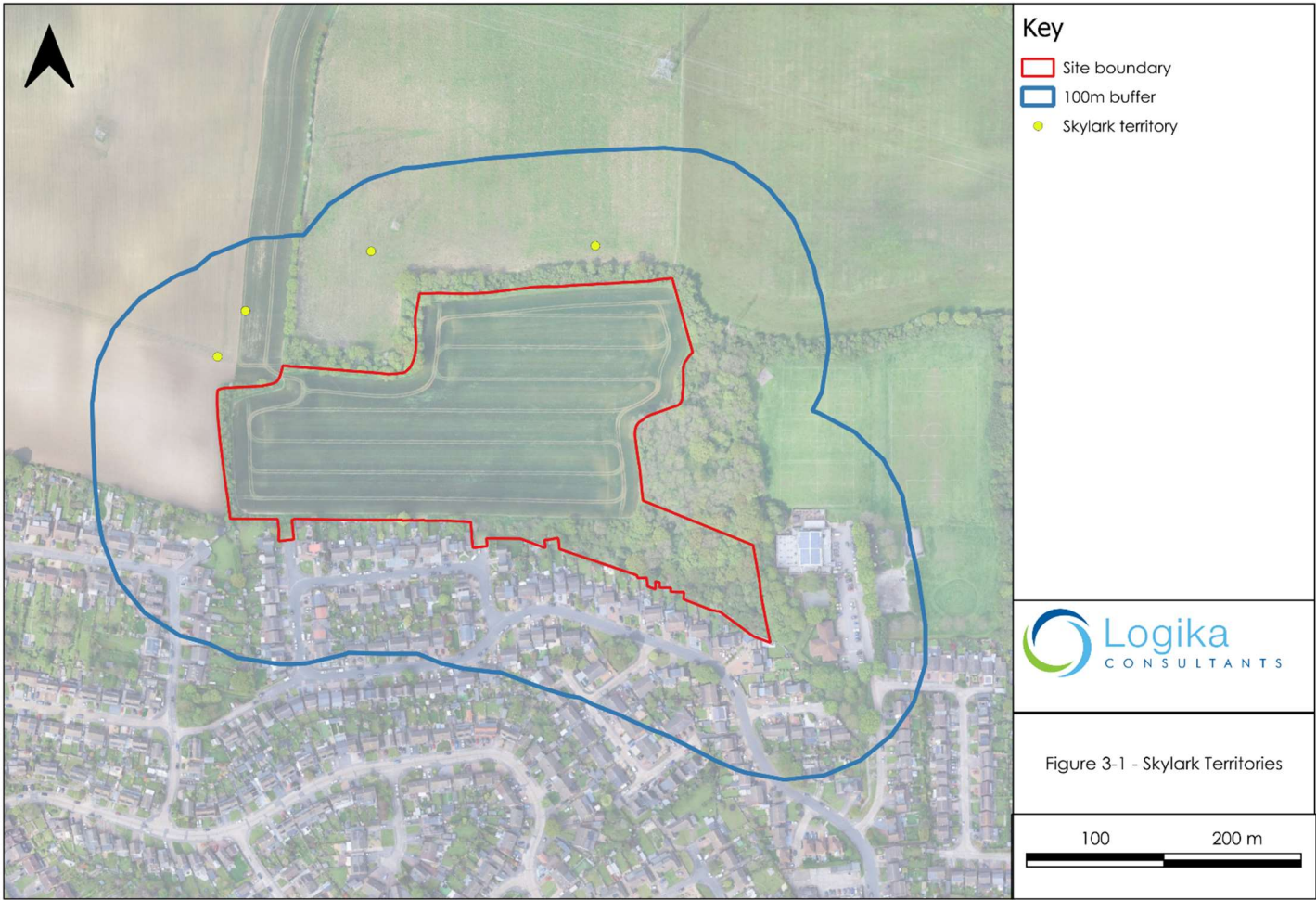


Figure 3-1: Skylark Territories

4 Conclusion

Overall, the Site supports a common and widespread assemblage of breeding and foraging birds, largely associated with boundary habitats such as hedgerows, trees, and scrub. While several species of conservation concern were recorded, including six Species of Principal Importance and nine Red List species, these were primarily observed utilising the Site for foraging or commuting, with the majority associated with boundary features rather than the Site interior.

Importantly, no ground-nesting bird territories were identified within the Site, and skylark (a notable ground-nesting species) was recorded only off-Site. As such, the Site is considered to have limited value for ground-nesting birds, although boundary habitats provide some ecological value for nesting and foraging species.

5 Appendices

A1 Survey Information

Table A1-1: Environmental Conditions

Visit	Date	Start Time	End Time	Surveyor	Wind (Beaufort ⁹)	Wind Direction	Cloud Cover (Oktas)	Temperature (Start and End °C)	Visibility Distance	Precipitation
1	13/05/25	05:30	08:40	Lunar Ecology Limited	Start: 1 End: 3	Start: E End: NE	Start: 1/8 End: 0/8	Start: 12 End: 16	1-3km	None
2	26/05/25	05:20	08:10	Lunar Ecology Limited	Start: 3 End: 4	Start: WSW End: W	Start: 1/8 End: 2/8	Start: 10 End: 13	>3km	None
3	19/06/25	05:30	08:40	Lunar Ecology Limited	Start: 1 End: 2	Start: S End: ENE	Start: 1/8 End: 1/8	Start: 16 End: 22	<3km	None
4	29/06/25	05:35	08:00	Lunar Ecology Limited	Start: 2 End: 2	Start: WNW End: WNW	Start: 7/8 End: 8/8	Start: 19 End: 21	<3km	None

⁹ Wind conditions follow the Beaufort Scale: 0 = Calm; 1 = Light air; 2 = Light breeze; 3 = Gentle breeze; 4 = Moderate breeze; 5 = Fresh breeze

A2 Territory Mapping Criteria

Territory mapping criteria has been taken from Amar et al. (2006). This paper adapted the original methodologies of Marchant, (1983) and Gilbert et al. (1998) to focus on how to attribute territories using fewer visits than the original methodology dictates. The paper attributes indicative territory locations based on four CBC visits, in-line with the fieldwork for this project.

At the end of the fieldwork all the registrations were transferred to 'species maps' on which the letter of the visit (A,B,C or D) was substituted for the species symbol, the registrations were plotted in exactly the same locations, and using exactly the same activity codes, as those on the original visit maps. The information on these maps was then used to make an assessment of numbers of breeding birds.

In view of the reduction of the number of visits from eight to 10 to four, modified criteria were used for analysing the census maps. The following principles were used to define territory clusters on the species maps:

1. The minimum number of visit registrations (from different visits) used to form a territory was two, although as many registrations as possible were placed into a single territory.
2. Registrations of songbirds alone and in song on two (or more) occasions could stand as a territory.
3. A lone bird alarm-calling or giving other vocalisations thought to have strong territorial significance was acceptable as a territory if there were previous or subsequent sightings within the same approximate area.
4. The presence of a nest in any state, including building, occupied, or recently (within the same season) used nest on just one visit, with no other registrations was acceptable as a territory.
5. A lone songbird not in song could not count as a territory, regardless of whether it was located toward the middle of the plot or near the edges.
6. A territory was not counted where there was just a single registration of a bird in mid-flight.
7. The presence of a family on a single visit (juvenile birds with attendant parents) was not permitted as a territory, since they may have moved into the area from outside the CBC plot. Unless it is apparent that the nest location is within the vicinity i.e. the young are 'branched' or grounded and flightless.
8. A lone pair was permitted as a territory, provided that the birds were not in mid-flight. In instances involving pairs of birds in flight, territories were only permitted when the pair was recorded taking off from a fixed point, e.g., a tree or the ground (but excluded when they had been seen in mid-flight). Such registrations were acceptable even if the sex of the individuals was not known, because this would follow the rationale already widely used and accepted in CBC territory analysis.
9. For species that are semi-colonial or occur in large groups where it may be hard to define separate individual territories (e.g., house sparrow) the numbers of birds per visit were added up. The maximum count was then divided by two to give the number of territories.

All territories falling at least partly inside the survey area were included in the totals, even if some of the registrations forming the territory cluster fell outside the survey area boundaries.

A3 Full Species Records

Species records below list all species recorded within the 2025 breeding bird surveys, including birds that were flying over or feeding onsite.

Table A3-1: Species Recorded During May and June 2025

Common Name	Scientific Name	Schedule 1	BoCC5	NERC S41
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	No	Green	No
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	No	Green	No
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	No	Green	No
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	No	Amber	No
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	No	Green	No
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	No	Green	No
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	No	Green	No
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	No	Green	No
Duncock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	No	Amber	No
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	No	Green	No
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	No	Green	No
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	No	Green	No
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	No	Red	No
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	No	Green	No
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	No	Red	No
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Yes	Amber	No

Common Name	Scientific Name	Schedule 1	BoCC5	NERC S41
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	No	Red	Yes
Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	No	Green	No
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	No	Green	No
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	No	Amber	No
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	No	Red	Yes
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	No	Green	No
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	No	Green	No
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>	No	Amber	No
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Yes	Green	No
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	No	Green	No
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	No	Amber	No
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	No	Red	Yes
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	No	Red	Yes
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	No	Red	Yes
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	No	Amber	No
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	No	Red	Yes
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	No	Green	No
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	No	Green	No



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